

**Fact Sheet****April 2005****Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program  
Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin****Overview**

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state natural resources conservation program that addresses state and nationally significant agricultural related environmental concerns. Through CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of up to 15 years. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

The Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin CREP targets the enrollment of 50,000 acres of land in the Bayou Macon and Boeuf River Watersheds. The CREP agreement is a partnership among FSA, the State of Louisiana and private organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, the Black Bear Conservation Committee and the United States Business Council for Sustainable Development.

**Benefits**

The program will help maintain and improve surface and ground water quality conditions in the Bayou Macon and Boeuf

River Watersheds by reducing agricultural non-point sources of pollution delivery to surface and groundwaters in 22 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved wellheads, 141 public supply wells, and numerous private shallow water drinking wells throughout the project area. Program participants will install riparian buffers, bottomland hardwood trees and wetland restoration practices. This focus is consistent with the Administration's goal of 3 million acres of wetlands.

The CREP will improve surface and groundwater quality for the many shallow water drinking wells utilized by rural residents within the project area, including an enhanced impact upon the drinking water derived from 141 public supply wells located fully or partially within the project area. The CREP will also establish and enhance wildlife habitat, leading to increased population and diversity of mammals, aquatic species and birds, including migratory waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds. The habitat has the potential to increase populations of declining species such as the Louisiana Black Bear and Northern Bobwhite Quail.

**Goals**

The goals of the Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin CREP are to:

- Enroll 50,000 acres of cropland and marginal pastureland into CREP to establish riparian buffers, bottomland hardwood trees and wetland restoration practices;
- Decrease by 30 percent sediment loading to streams, bayous and lakes by helping participants install conservation measures which reduce erosion rates, with an emphasis on lands that are highly erosive and are eroding at a rate equal to, or above tolerance (generally 5 tons/acre/year);
- Reduce runoff containing dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus by 2,100 tons of nitrogen and 975 tons of phosphorus annually. Since the watersheds eventually drain into the Gulf of Mexico, the reduced nitrogen and phosphorus levels will benefit the hypoxia zone in the northern Gulf;
- Increase shallow water areas and wetlands to serve as nutrient/chemical uptake and filtering sites for neo-tropical migrants, shorebirds, waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species; and
- Establish critical habitat for fish and wildlife resources by helping participants develop 13,500 acres of bottomland wildlife habitat, 17,000 acres of wetland habitat and 4,500 acres of riparian buffers.

## **Fact Sheet**

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program**

#### **Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin**

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### **Eligibility Requirements**

Landowners can offer eligible cropland and marginal pastureland adjacent to the Bayou Macon and Boeuf River Watersheds. This area includes nine Louisiana Parishes: all of the Parishes of Richland and West Carroll and portions of Caldwell, Catahoula, East Carroll, Franklin, Madison, Morehouse, and Ouachita Parishes.

In addition, cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner. Marginal pastureland along streams, watercourses and certain upland areas is also eligible for enrollment.

Persons who have acreage under an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are ineligible for CREP on that acreage until that contract expires. Other requirements will also apply. Interested producers should contact their local FSA office for specific information regarding their eligibility for CREP.

### **Sign-up and Contract Duration**

Sign-up for the CREP will be announced later by the State, and will continue until enrollment goals are attained, or through Dec. 31, 2007, whichever comes first.

Land enrolled in the program remains under contract for a period of 14 to 15 years, as specified in the contract.

### **Approved Conservation Measures**

To better serve program goals, the following CRP conservation practices are approved for the Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin CREP:

- CP1 - Establishment of Introduced Grasses and Legumes (up to a 1,000-acre limit)
- CP2 - Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses (up to a 500-acre limit)
- CP3 - Tree Planting
- CP3A - Hardwood Tree Planting
- CP4D - Permanent Wildlife Habitat / Non-Easement
- CP8A - Grass Waterways
- CP9 - Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife (35-acre limitation)
- CP12 - Wildlife Food Plot
- CP21 - Filter Strip
- CP22 - Riparian Buffer
- CP23 - Wetland Restoration
- CP31 - Bottomland Hardwood Establishment

### **FSA Payments**

Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of FSA payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment: A one-time payment of \$140 to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in CP2, CP4D, CP8A, CP21, CP22 and CP31. This payment is made after the contract has been signed and approved (for 14- to 15-year contracts).

- Practice Incentive Payment: A one-time payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to establish CP2, CP4D, CP8A, CP9, CP21, CP22 and CP31.
- Wetland Restoration Payment: A one-time payment that is 25 percent of the required hydrologic restoration costs for CP23.
- Cost-share Assistance: Cost-share of up to 50 percent to install approved conservation practices.
- Annual Rental Payment: An annual payment for the life of the contract. The payment consists of the sum of three components:
  - Base Soil Rental Rate determined by calculating the normal CRP weighted average soil rental rate for the three predominant soil types using the current posted applicable local soil rental rates.
  - Incentive Payment of 50 percent (.5 times average soil rental rate) of the base CRP contract annual rental rate per acre otherwise applicable to the land to be enrolled in the CREP (as calculated under Paragraph IV.C. without regard to other incentive payments), for all practices offered and eligible for CREP.
  - Annual Maintenance Payment of \$5.00 per acre for all practices offered, eligible, and accepted for CREP consistent with applicable CRP regulations.

## **Fact Sheet**

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program**

#### **Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin**

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### **State Payments and Other Assistance**

The State of Louisiana and private partners will:

- Contribute at least 20 percent of the overall costs of implementing the CREP through a combination of State budgetary allocations, in-kind services and assistance-related funding. Costs may include expenses for program administration, technical assistance, local program assistance and State and local expenditures for agricultural non-point source pollution related to goals in the project area.
- Pay all costs associated with the CREP annual water quality monitoring program.
- Provide additional technical assistance, where resources are available, to develop conservation plans and to locate, design and engineer wetlands to be restored or constructed.

may still enroll eligible land in the general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous sign-up. For instance, CREP payments are at a higher effective rate.

### **Haying and Grazing**

Haying and grazing are not permitted during the CRP contract period unless FSA allows them for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

### **For More Information**

More information on the Louisiana Lower Ouachita River Basin CREP is available at local FSA offices and on FSA's Web site at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm)

### **Cost**

The total cost over a 15-year period is estimated at \$121 million, with FSA contributing \$66 million and the State of Louisiana and private partners funding \$55 million. The \$121 million does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers.

### **CRP Enrollment**

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land; applicants

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